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ABSTRACT

A survey instrument containing 191 task statements was sent to Ohio's 49 joint vocational school superintendents in order to identify the competencies necessary in administering a joint vocational school. Forty-six superintendents responded, for a 93.88 percent response rate. Of the 191 tasks, 121 (63 percent) were deemed important to superintendents. Those surveyed felt adequate to perform only 18 (9 percent) of the identified tasks. Vocational education background was not a factor in either the perceived importance of tasks or the perceived adequacy of preparation to perform the specified tasks. Those superintendents who had earned an educational specialist degree or doctorate did not perceive themselves to be any more adequately prepared than did those with master's degrees. The following tasks were among those considered important by more than 95 percent of the respondents: developing overall vocational program goals, implementing local board and administrative policies, interpreting and applying state and federal vocational education legislation, preparing and recommending personnel policies, recruiting and interviewing potential staff and recommending them to administration and board, resolving staff grievances and complaints, recommending staff promotions and dismissals, maintaining ethical standards expected of a professional educator, developing and maintaining professional relationships with other administrators, developing and maintaining professional relationships with state department of education personnel, promoting professional image, and developing plans for promoting good public relations. (MN)

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PREPARING VOCATIONAL SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS
NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON "ACHIEVING PROFESSIONAL EXCELLENCE"
LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS

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Introduction

A preparation program for the vocational school superintendent begins with the identification and analysis of those competencies perceived to be important in superintendent job performance. Competences perceived to be important by vocational school superintendents and verified as such need to be considered for use by universities and state certification agencies in superintendent preparation and certification programs.

An Ohio study was recently completed in order to determine (1) what competencies Ohio joint vocational school superintendents perceived as being important to effectively fulfilling their roles as superintendents and (2) the degree to which Ohio joint vocational school superintendents perceived they were professionally prepared to effectively fulfill their roles as superintendents. The data from the study resulted in not only a listing of important competencies, but also provided interesting insights into the professional preparation of superintendents, who are responsible for administration of vocational programs.

Why an Ohio Study?

Passage of the 1963 Vocational Education Act and subsequent federal legislation provided for the expansion of vocational education to an extent never before possible. In response to the provisions of the 1963 Vocational Education Act, Ohio legislation was passed requiring that every public school district provide an adequate vocational education program. Twelve different occupational offerings and twenty classes of vocational education had to be offered Ohio's eleventh and twelfth grade students. School

districts with fewer than 1,500 students could become members of joint vocational school districts.[1]

The 1963 Vocational Education Act provided substantial support and monies for the construction of joint vocational schools to meet the growing demands for vocational education. In 1963 the number of students served by vocational education in Ohio was 20,267 which represented seven percent of students enrolled in grades eleven and twelve. By 1965, when Ohio opened its first joint vocational school, 25,525 students or eight percent of students in grades eleven and twelve were being served by vocational education. In the Fall of 1982, with forty-nine joint vocational schools in operation serving the vocational needs of Ohio students, 120,730 students were enrolled in secondary job training representing forty-one percent of all students enrolled in grades eleven and twelve.[2]

In order to provide quality vocational education programs for the ever increasing numbers of vocational students, Ohio revised code provided for the creation of joint vocational school districts if the boards of education in each school district so consented. There are also provisions in the law which pertain to the superintendent of a joint vocational school.

> The superintendent of schools of a joint vocational school district shall exercise the duties and authority vested by law in a superintendent of schools pertaining to the operation of a school district and the employment and supervision of its personnel.[3]

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[1]Ohio Advisory Council for Vocational Education, Eighth Annual Report (Columbus, Ohio, 1977), p. 5.

[2]George Sterling, A Profile of Vocational Education in Ohio, A Report Prepared for the 1983 Ohio Congressional Breakfast (Washington, D.C., 1983), p. 2.

[3]Paul E. Spayde, Baldwins Ohio School Law (Cleveland: Banks-Baldwin Law Publishing Co., 1980), p. 148.

Schools with the responsibility of preparing vocational students for the world of work needed a staff and administration that were qualified. With respect to those who administer joint vocational schools, the laws and regulations for Ohio administrator certification mandate that the vocational director's or supervisor's certificate be issued the candidate upon the completion of ten semester hours of vocational course work along with twenty-seven months of successful teaching experience in a vocational education program. The regulations for certification of the joint vocational school superintendent, who serves as chief administrator, do not include vocational course work or vocational experience. The provisional superintendent's certificate will be issued to the holder of a master's degree with sixty semester hours of graduate work and twenty-seven months of experience in an administrative position under the appropriate certificate.[4]

It is interesting to note that provisions were made, in certification law, to ensure that those responsible for administration at the joint vocational school, with the exception of the superintendent, have a background which includes both vocational course work and experience. Although there is a clear intent that those administrators closest to the operation of vocational education programs have vocational experience, there does not seem to be a perceived need for the joint vocational school superintendent to have any vocational education course work or vocational education experience.

Vocational administration is unique because of the educational settings, program offerings, and student populations. This uniqueness necessitates

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[4]Paul W. Hailey, Laws and Regulations Governing Teacher Education and and Certification (Columbus, Ohio, Effective January 1, 1972), p. 21.

that those who administer vocational education and especially the top administrator receive training in vocational education. There was a need to identify the knowledge and skills needed, the tasks performed, and the adequacy of preparation of Ohio joint vocational school superintendents.

The Literature

A literature search was completed relative to the purposes of the study which were to identify the competencies important to Ohio joint vocational school superintendents and to determine how superintendents felt about the adequacy of their professional preparation to perform the tasks associated with the superintendent's role.

In the literature there were numerous examples of need assessment surveys being used to identify competencies needed by vocational supervisors and directors in job performance. In all the studies located pertaining to public school and vocational superintendents need assessment surveys were sent to administrator practitioners and the competencies identified as important, by the respondents, were later used as a guide for planning certification and preparation programs for general and vocational education superintendents and for vocational supervisors and directors.

In the studies of competencies important to general education superintendents, there was no mention of the importance of competence in vocational education administration with the exception of the study completed by the Ohio Department of Education Administrator Preparation Advisory Committee. In that study, 54.4 percent of the 225 responding Ohio school superintendents and assistant superintendents indicated that vocational education administration was an important or very important area for the superintendency, while 9.4 percent of the respondents reported

that their preparation in vocational education administration was good or very good. Forty-four percent of those responding indicated that vocational eudcation administration was not included in their preparation program.

Comparisons of the findings of the studies on general education superintendent competencies revealed little in the way of differences in perceptions by superintendents of important competencies. Competencies pertaining to human relations, planning, organizing, and evaluating the school system were identified as the most important competencies to be incorporated into preparation and certification programs for the public school superintendent.

There were more similarities than differences between general and vocational education superintendent competencies needed in the areas of curriculum, instruction, program planning, student services, personnel management, staff development, professional relations, community relations, facilities management, and business management. Vocational education superintendent studies emphasized important competencies that pertain to preparation of students for a job and the development of a close working relationship with state and federal agencies that administer vocational monies and programs.

A 1984 national study of vocational education administrator certification, by this writer, revealed that thirty-six of the forty-nine (73.46 percent) state certification agencies responding to a survey have required some form of vocational administrator certification in their states. There was a recognized need for certification of vocational administrators. There was also a need to identify important vocational administrator competencies at all levels of administration for inclusion in certification and preparation programs.

Findings

In order to determine what tasks were important to Ohio joint vocational school superintendents and the superintendents' feelings of the adequacy of their professional preparation to perform these tasks, a survey instrument containing 191 task statements was sent to all forty-nine Ohio joint vocational school superintendents. Forty-six of the forty-nine superintendents returned the survey instrument for a 93.88 percent rate of return.

Percentages were used to report the responses of the vocational superintendents on the 191 tasks within the nine competency categories. Tables 1 through 9 show, by percentages, Ohio joint vocational school superintendents' perceptions of the importance of each of the 191 task statements found in the survey instrument and the superintendents' perceived adequacy of preparation to perform the identified tasks. The 191 task statements are listed under the appropriate competency categories.

A 70 percent criterion was used to determine which of the 191 listed tasks were important to Ohio joint vocational school superintendents and which tasks superintendents perceived they had been adequately prepared to perform. Of the 191 tasks, 121 (63 percent) were determined to be important to superintendents. Superintendents felt adequately prepared to perform eighteen (9 percent) of the 191 identified tasks.

It was also found that (1) a vocational education background was not a factor in either the perceived importance of tasks of the perceived adequacy of preparation to perform the tasks; (2) superintendents were able to identify competency categories that were significantly more important than other categories and (3) superintendents who earned an Educational Specialist degree or Doctorate did not perceive themselves to be any more adequately prepared than the superintendent who had Master's degrees.

TABLE 1

TASKS BY PERCENTAGE OF OHIO JOINT VOCATIONAL SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS, IN CATEGORY A: PROGRAM PLANNING, DEVELOPMENT, AND EVALUATION, WHO SCORED COMPETENCIES AS IMPORTANT OR VERY IMPORTANT AND PREPARATION AS GOOD OR VERY GOOD

Task Number	Task Function	Percentage on Perceived Importance	Percentage on Adequacy of Preparation
A1	Survey student and parent interests	54	48
A2	Collect and analyze manpower needs assessment data	70	37
A3	Direct occupational task analysis for use in curriculum development	63	59
A4	Direct the identification of entry-level requirements for jobs	52	39
A5	Involve community representatives in program planning and development	91	70
A6	Obtain state and federal services and resources for program development	81	44
A7	Cooperate with district, county, regional, and state agencies in developing and operating vocational programs	89	59
A8	Prepare annual program plans	89	46
A9	Prepare and update long-range program plans	94	52
A10	Develop overall vocational program goals	96	52
A11	Coordinates district curriculum development efforts	65	59

TABLE 1 --continued

Task Number	Task Function	Percentage on Perceived Importance	Percentage on Adequacy of Preparation
A12	Approve courses of study	61	70
A13	Establish school admission and graduation requirements	61	48
A14	Recommend program policies to the administration and board	94	63
A15	Implement local board and administrative policies	100	67
A16	Interpret and apply state and/or federal vocational education legislation	96	41
A17	Interpret and apply other relevant state and federal legislation	83	48
A18	Develop plans for evaluating instructional programs	80	74
A19	Direct self-evaluation of the district vocational programs	81	59
A20	Involve external evaluation personnel in assessing program effectiveness	74	50
A21	Design and select instruments for evaluating the instructional program	63	48
A22	Evaluate the effectiveness of the instructional program	87	63
A23	Initiate student and employer follow-up studies	52	46
A24	Analyze student and employer follow-up studies	72	46

TABLE 1.--continued

Task Number	Task Function	Percentage on Perceived Importance	Percentage on Adequacy of Preparation
A25	Recommend curriculum revisions based on evaluation data	78	59
A26	Assess student testing and grading procedures	52	59
A27	Analyze the school and community's feelings toward educational change	80	52
A28	Write proposals for the funding of new programs and the improvement of existing programs	80	43
A29	Coordinate local demonstration, pilot, and exemplary programs	76	44
A30	Design and oversee local research studies	50	48
A31	Interpret and use research results for program development and improvement	76	54
A32	Develop supplemental/remedial instructional programs to meet student needs	59	37

TABLE 2

TASKS BY PERCENTAGE OF OHIO JOINT VOCATIONAL SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS, IN CATEGORY B: INSTRUCTIONAL MANAGEMENT, WHO SCORED COMPETENCIES AS IMPORTANT OR VERY IMPORTANT AND PREPARATION AS GOOD OR VERY GOOD

Task Number	Task Function	Percentage on Perceived Importance	Percentage on Adequacy of Preparation
B1	Establish instructional program entry and completion requirements	59	46
B2	Establish student rules and policies (such as attendance and discipline)	65	52
B3	Enforce student rules and policies	52	57
B4	Design and oversee student progress reporting procedures	41	54
B5	Approve student promotions/ reassignments	46	52
B6	Prepare a master schedule of course offerings	33	59
B7	Guide staff in selecting and using effective instructional strategies (such as individualized instruction)	51	65
B8	Establish and implement a curriculum design that will achieve the school's instructional goals	61	52
B9	Guide staff in integrating and articulating the vocational program with the total educational program	74	48
B10	Promote the integration of vocational student organizational activities into the instructional program	61	48

TABLE 2 --continued

Task Number	Task Function	Percentage on Perceived Importance	Percentage on Adequacy of Preparation
B11	Provide for special needs programs	43	57
B12	Provide for supplemental/remedial instructional programs	70	39
B13	Provide for special needs programs	76	39
B14	Provide for adult/continuing education programs	89	52
B15	Arrange for students to attend programs offered by other educational agencies	37	30
B16	Guide the articulation of secondary and postsecondary vocational program objectives	67	37
B17	Approve selection of instructional equipment	59	50
B18	Approve selection of instructional materials	59	50
B19	Maintain a learning resources center for students	50	39

TABLE 3

TASKS BY PERCENTAGE OF OHIO JOINT VOCATIONAL SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS, IN CATEGORY C: STUDENT SERVICES, WHO SCORED COMPETENCIES AS IMPORTANT OR VERY IMPORTANT AND PREPARATION AS GOOD OR VERY GOOD

Task Number	Task Function	Percentage on Perceived Importance	Percentage on Adequacy of Preparation
C1	Oversee student recruitment activities	61	48
C2	Oversee school admission services	44	41
C3	Arrange for student loan and grant programs	63	26
C4	Arrange for work study programs	24	35
C5	Oversee student guidance and testing services	41	50
C6	Oversee student job placement and follow-up services	57	48
C7	Oversee extracurricular organizations and activities	33	50
C8	Provide for a student record keeping system	46	52
C9	Interpret and apply student rights, laws, and regulations	72	59
C10	Interpret and apply Veteran's Administration laws and regulations	15	20

TABLE 4

TASKS BY PERCENTAGE OF OHIO JOINT VOCATIONAL SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS, IN CATEGORY D: PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT, WHO SCORED COMPETENCIES AS IMPORTANT OR VERY IMPORTANT AND PREPARATION AS GOOD OR VERY GOOD

Task Number	Task Function	Percentage on Perceived Importance	Percentage on Adequacy of Preparation
D1	Prepare and recommend personnel policies	98	65
D2	Prepare and maintain a personnel handbook	91	57
D3	Assess program staffing requirements	94	65
D4	Prepare job descriptions	67	61
D5	Establish staff selection and recruitment procedures	93	70
D6	Recruit and interview potential staff	98	63
D7	Recommend potential staff to the administration and board	98	63
D8	Participate in negotiating staff working agreements	98	44
D9	Establish staff grievance procedures	87	39
D10	Resolve staff grievances and complaints	96	48
D11	Interpret the staff benefits program	74	37
D12	Counsel and advise staff on professional matters	78	46

TABLE 4 --continued

Task Number	Task Function	Percentage on Perceived Importance	Percentage on Adequacy of Preparation
D13	Schedule staff work loads	70	44
D14	Schedule staff leaves, vacations, and sabbaticals	56	37
D15	Oversee the work of teachers and other school personnel	72	54
D16	Provide for a staff record-keeping system	74	46
D17	Plan and conduct staff meetings	85	65
D18	Prepare bulletins and other communications designed to keep the staff informed	91	57
D19	Observe and evaluate staff performances	78	76
D20	Recommend staff promotions and dismissals	100	57
D21	Provide guidance to the staff on legal matters affecting the school program	83	54
D22	Interpret and apply licensing and certification regulations	80	46
D23	Interpret and apply labor laws and regulations	80	35
D24	Interpret and apply affirmative action laws and regulations	70	26

TABLE 5

TASKS BY PERCENTAGE OF OHIO JOINT VOCATIONAL SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS, IN CATEGORY E: STAFF DEVELOPMENT, WHO SCORED COMPETENCIES AS IMPORTANT OR VERY IMPORTANT AND PREPARATION AS GOOD OR VERY GOOD

Task Number	Task Function	Percentage on Perceived Importance	Percentage on Adequacy of Preparation
E1	Assess staff development needs	80	46
E2	Assist in the preparation of individual staff profiles	54	33
E3	Counsel with staff regarding personnel development needs and activities	65	44
E4	Establish and maintain a staff learning resources center	46	30
E5	Conduct workshops and other in-service programs for professional personnel	65	43
E6	Arrange for workshops and other in-service programs for professional personnel	89	43
E7	Provide for in-service programs for supportive personnel	74	42
E8	Provide for preservice programs for professional personnel	78	46
E9	Arrange for staff exchanges with business and industry	59	35
E10	Assist supervising teachers in planning for and working with student teachers	35	35
E11	Evaluate staff development programs	74	54

TABLE 6

TASKS BY PERCENTAGE OF OHIO JOINT VOCATIONAL SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS, IN CATEGORY F: PROFESSIONAL RELATIONS AND SELF-DEVELOPMENT, WHO SCORED COMPETENCIES AS IMPORTANT OR VERY IMPORTANT AND PREPARATION AS GOOD OR VERY GOOD

Task Number	Task Function	Percentage on Perceived Importance	Percentage on Adequacy of Preparation
F1	Maintain ethical standards expected of a professional educator	96	78
F2	Develop and maintain professional relationships with other administrators	100	74
F3	Develop and maintain professional relationships with state department of education personnel	98	70
F4	Develop and maintain relationships with personnel in professional organizations	89	67
F5	Participate in professional organizations	87	63
F6	Participate in professional meetings for self-improvement	94	61
F7	Promote professional image through personal appearance and conduct	96	70
F8	Assist with the development of state and/or federal plans for vocational education	67	41
F9	Participate in the development of vocational education legislation	83	33

TABLE 6 --continued

Task Number	Task Function	Percentage on Perceived Importance	Percentage on Adequacy of Preparation
F10	Prepare policy and commendation statements	91	46
F11	Represent teacher interest and concerns to other administrators and the board	63	39
F12	Develop effective interpersonal skills	94	46
F13	Write articles and materials for journals and other professional media	37	46
F14	Read and use information from professional journals, reports, and related materials for self-improvement	78	61
F15	Apply management by objectives (MBO) techniques to personal work assignments	61	52
F16	Develop cooperative problem-solving and decision-making skills	83	54
F17	Assess personal performance as an administrator	87	57

TABLE 7

TASKS BY PERCENTAGE OF OHIO JOINT VOCATIONAL SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS, IN CATEGORY G: SCHOOL/EMPLOYER/COMMUNITY RELATIONS, WHO SCORED COMPETENCIES AS IMPORTANT OR VERY IMPORTANT AND PREPARATION AS GOOD OR VERY GOOD

Task Number	Task Function	Percentage on Perceived Importance	Percentage on Adequacy of Preparation
G1	Develop a plan for promoting good public relations	98	72
G2	Prepare and recommend public relations and communications policies	96	74
G3	Coordinate use of occupational (craft) advisory committees	70	74
G4	Organize and work with a general vocational advisory council	80	65
G5	Develop working relationships with employers and agencies	87	57
G6	Prepare and recommend cooperative agreements with other agencies	80	37
G7	Involve community leaders (political and nonpolitical) in school programs and activities	91	48
G8	Participate in school organizations	76	65
G9	Participate in community organizations	93	65
G10	Promote good relationships between vocational and general education staff	89	50

TABLE 7 --continued

Task Number	Task Function	Percentage on Perceived Importance	Percentage on Adequacy of Preparation
G11	Encourage staff participation in community civic, service, and social organizations	72	46
G12	Promote cooperative efforts of parent and teacher groups	65	44
G13	Conduct informational programs for the public (such as open house and career awareness programs)	89	59
G14	Meet and confer with visitors	83	48
G15	Conduct informational programs for the public (such as open house and career awareness programs)	83	54
G16	Make public presentations on school programs and activities	87	63
G17	Conduct public hearings and meetings on school issues	70	44
G18	Conduct alumni relations program	28	28
G19	Conduct orientation programs for students and staff	65	54
G20	Conduct recognition programs for students, staff, and community supporters	74	52
G21	Plan for exhibits and displays	63	39
G22	Develop materials to promote the vocational programs	80	54
G23	Write news releases for school and area media	76	54

TABLE 7 --continued

Task Number	Task Function	Percentage on Perceived Importance	Percentage on Adequacy of Preparation
G24	Obtain and analyze informal feedback about the school	81	50
G25	Evaluate the public relations program	89	59
G26	Interpret and apply public "right-to-know" laws and regulation	65	38

TABLE 8

TASKS BY PERCENTAGE OF OHIO JOINT VOCATIONAL SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS, IN CATEGORY H: FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT MANAGEMENT, WHO SCORED COMPETENCIES AS IMPORTANT OR VERY IMPORTANT AND PREPARATION AS GOOD OR VERY GOOD

Task Number	Task Function	Percentage on Perceived Importance	Percentage on Adequacy of Preparation
H1	Assess the need for physical facilities	93	81
H2	Conduct land and facility feasibility studies	76	65
H3	Recommend building sites	72	72
H4	Recommend the selection of an architect	78	70
H5	Oversee architectural planning	83	67
H6	Apply building code regulations to school facilities	72	54
H7	Submit facility and equipment specifications	81	63
H8	Analyze building and equipment contract bids	80	54
H9	Oversee the construction of facilities	87	72
H10	Recommend acceptance of new building	76	65
H11	provide and maintain residential facilities for students	13	17
H12	Procure equipment and furnishings	74	70
H13	Plan space requirements for programs	78	74

TABLE 8 --continued

Task Number	Task Function	Percentage on Perceived Importance	Percentage on Adequacy of Preparation
H14	Assign space according to priority needs	70	68
H15	Develop and implement an equipment and supply inventory system	83	61
H16	Establish preventative maintenance program for equipment and facilities	81	48
H17	Establish vehicle maintenance program	65	39
H18	Oversee the daily maintenance and upkeep of facilities	63	59
H19	Oversee the daily maintenance and upkeep of grounds	57	52
H20	Interpret and apply transportation laws and regulations	35	30
H21	Arrange for student transportation services	24	25
H22	Oversee school cafeteria services	41	35
H23	Arrange for vending services	20	33
H24	Interpret and apply health and safety laws and regulations	63	37
H25	Develop and implement safety programs	61	54
H26	Establish emergency plans (such as fire and disaster)	76	41
H27	Establish and oversee a security program	74	37

TABLE 8 -continued

Task Number	Task Function	Percentage on Perceived Importance	Percentage on Adequacy of Preparation
H28	Schedule and oversee community's use of facilities	59	50
H29	Develop long-range facility and equipment plans	91	61
H30	Prepare and submit renovation and alteration plans	74	61

TABLE 9

TASKS BY PERCENTAGE OF OHIO JOINT VOCATIONAL SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS, IN CATEGORY I: BUSINESS AND FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT, WHO SCORED COMPETENCIES AS IMPORTANT OR VERY IMPORTANT AND PREPARATION AS GOOD OR VERY GOOD

Task Number	Task Function	Percentage on Perceived Importance	Percentage on Adequacy of Preparation
I1	Prepare and recommend financial policies	98	59
I2	Establish purchasing and payment procedures	85	52
I3	Establish receiving and shipping procedures	65	50
I4	Prepare and regulate operational budgets	96	57
I5	Prepare and regulate program budgets	87	63
I6	Prepare and regulate capital improvement budgets	94	57
I7	Prepare long-range budgets based on total program requirements	96	59
I8	Adopt an appropriate financial accounting system	74	52
I9	Analyze the cost of operating various instructional programs	89	52
I10	Locate sources of funds for program development and operation	89	48
I11	Present levies and bond issues to voters	98	54

TABLE 9 --continued

Task Number	Task Function	Percentage on Perceived Importance	Percentage on Adequacy of Preparation
I12	Approve all major expenditures	91	61
I13	Approve requisitions and work orders	67	46
I14	Arrange for the investment of surplus funds	61	42
I15	Provide for the collection of student fees	39	33
I16	Establish and maintain a petty cash fund	13	28
I17	Establish procedures for charging for student work	44	28
I18	Determine insurance coverage needs	83	37
I19	Select and maintain an insurance program	80	35
I20	Interpret and apply insurance laws and regulations	65	17
I21	Respond to business correspondence	89	46
I22	Prepare local, state, and federal reports	74	48

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